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Wednesday, 15 April 2009, 15:00

C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 000247

DEPARTMENT FOR S/WCI - WILLIAMSON/DOHERTY, L - DONOGHUE,

L/UNA - BUCHWALD, L/AN - OHAHS

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TAGS PREL, PGOV, KAWC

SUBJECT: SCSL'S TAYLOR TRIAL MEETS KEY MILESTONE, BUT SCSL

STILL FACES SERIOUS HURDLES

REF: A. REF: A) 2008 THE HAGUE 00021 B. B) 2008 THE HAGUE 00226

Classified By: Legal Counselor Denise G. Manning per reasons 1.5(b, d).

-- SUMMARY: SCSL MEETS A KEY MILESTONE, BUT FACES UNCERTAINTY IN TERMS OF TIMING, FINANCES, AND COMPLETION ISSUES --

1. (SBU) On February 27, 2009, the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL or Court) took another step toward completing its work when the Prosecution

--BACKGROUND: A SMALL COURT WITH SEVERAL FIRSTS --

2. (U) A Trailblazing Court. The hybrid SCSL, created in 2002 through an agreement between the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone

3. (U) Last Trial Standing. In 2003, the SCSL indicted Charles Taylor, the leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia from 1989 to 1997

))TIMING: TAYLOR TRIAL'S LINK TO CLOSING SCSL))

4. (SBU) Status of Trial. As the only ongoing SCSL trial, the Taylor trial is the linchpin to the SCSL completing its work. From April 6-9, 2009

5. (SBU) Next Up: Defense Case. A contact in the Registry has indicated that Defense will likely request three months to prepare for trial and

6. (U) Spill-Over Timing Effects. A delay in the timing for the Taylor trial may create additional challenges. First, the International Criminal Court

))THE JUDICIAL FACTOR))

7. (C) Judges Slowing Things Down? Further muddying timing predictions, Court employees have intimated that the Trial Chamber could work more

8. (SBU) Expedited Appeals? The Appeals Chamber, with one empty seat, consists of President Renate Winter (Austria); Vice President Jon Kamandje

))DEFENSE STRATEGY: WHO ME?))

9. (SBU) Drama-Bound Defense Case. A British Queen's Counsel, Courtenay Griffiths, heads Charles Taylor's top-notch and quick-tongued defense

))AN IMMINENT BUDGET CRISIS))

10. (C) Funding Shortfall. The Registry fears that the Court will run out of money as early as next month, although an expected Canadian USD 6

11. (U) Cost-cutting Measures: Concerned about the looming financial crisis, the Registry has undertaken cost-saving measures, reducing staff

12. (SBU) Help from Washington. The Registry may also seek USG's assistance on financial issues. First, it may press the USG not to reduce its

))COMPLETION HICCUPS AND ISSUES))

13. (SBU) Registrar Musical Chairs. On April 8, 2009, the Court announced Registrar von Hebel's resignation, effective as of June 1, 2009. Vor

))COMMENT: RESIDUAL ISSUES))

14. (SBU) A Larger Role for The Hague? Although currently headquartered in Freetown, Sierra Leone, the Registry has toyed with the possibility

GALLAGHER